

GOVERNORS WORKFORCE  
EDUCATION TASK FORCE

# *Pathways* TO PROSPERITY

Success for *Every* Student in the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Workplace

*October 2001*

October 2001

Dear Governor Hodges:

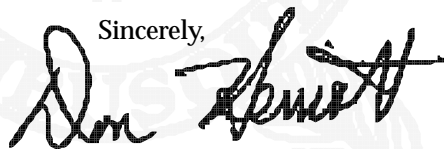
Pursuant to your Executive Order 2000-17 and on behalf of the Governor's Task Force on Workforce Education, I am pleased to deliver to you and the General Assembly our final report. After long deliberation, which included thoughtful research and analysis, consulting with national and international experts, and extensive dialogue among the Task Force members who are of diverse backgrounds and experiences, the Governor's Workforce Education Task Force concludes that:

South Carolina can be a state where all students succeed, having been given the opportunity and preparation to lead productive and fulfilling lives; businesses thrive in a world that is more globally competitive and technology rich; and all its citizens enjoy an outstanding quality of life.

The Task Force also concludes that this future is possible only with basic educational reforms that are both student-centered and based on workforce needs. A properly educated workforce prepared through college, technical college, or high school is fundamental in creating and maintaining the vibrant economic environment needed to turn our vision into reality. Equally strong is the Task Force's conviction that failure to fully implement and sustain requisite educational reforms will have profound negative social and economic consequences.

We believe the roadmap to these reforms is contained in our Task Force report, titled "*Pathways to Prosperity: Success for Every Student in the 21st-Century Workplace*," which we respectfully submit to you and the General Assembly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Herriott", written over a faint circular seal of the South Carolina General Assembly.

Don Herriott  
Chair  
Governor's Workforce Education Task Force

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

## I. OUR CHALLENGE

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Workforce Gap Diagram
2. Pathways to Prosperity Diagram

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Career Clusters
2. *1994 School-to-Work Transition Act* Compliance and Governor's Workforce Education Council
3. Curriculum Alignment with Current Workplace Needs
4. Educational Standards and Testing
5. Professional Development
6. High-Risk Dropout Alternatives
7. Character Education
8. Consolidated Statewide Career Delivery Systems
9. Communications Program

## IV. BARRIERS AND OBSTACLES

## V. IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

## VI. PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY SUMMARY

## VII. TASK FORCE PROCESS

## VIII. TASK FORCE MEMBERS

## IX. APPENDIX

### 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- A. Governor's Executive Order to the Task Force
- B. *1994 School-to-Work Transition Act*
- C. Evaluating the Effectiveness of School-to-Work/Tech Prep Consortia
- D. Dr. Willard Daggett's Regional Meetings Summary
- E. South Carolina Selected Grade Comparisons of High School Graduates
- F. South Carolina High School Graduates' Postsecondary Choices
- G. Public Opinion Survey Results
- H. Glossary

### 2. RECOMMENDATION-RELATED INFORMATION

- A. Summary Matrix of Task Force Recommendations
- B. Career Cluster Example
- C. Letter from the School-to-Work Advisory Council Chair and South Carolina State Chamber of Commerce President
- D. *High Schools That Work* Model
- E. District Diploma Course Matrix

## X. REFERENCES

## XI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# Our Challenge

Success for every student in the 21st-century workplace. This is our challenge, fellow South Carolinians, and it won't be easy because the playing field has changed. A strong academic education in the traditional sense is no longer enough. To keep pace with the changing business environment, our students must also have practical experience, communication and character-related skills, and the ability to apply what they learn—all things we can't teach them unless we rethink how we view education.

For all students to be successful, we not only have to equip them for today's job market, but we have to tailor education to suit their needs, abilities, and interests. Sounds simple enough, and if we can do it, we will have accomplished something great.

This is because the workforce education issue comes with decades of ingrained beliefs and unspoken understandings about the roles education and business should play in our lives and our children's lives. While our rational side can comprehend the issues at hand—the logic of the education-workforce gap and the negative impact the Task Force predicts it will have—our emotional side questions how severe the problem really is and is skeptical as to the reality of the apparent shift in the academics and skills needed for jobs of this century.

And when logic meets emotion, the result is a “wait and see” mentality—something we simply do not have time for.

This issue isn't political or partisan. It is not a concern just in the Upstate, the Midlands, Pee Dee, or the Lowcountry. It is not a problem just for minority or economically disadvantaged communities. It is not a worry just for parents, businesspeople, or educators. It affects each and every one of us.

However, the responsibility for creating this kind of change cannot rest on the shoulders of our state's many dedicated educators alone; without a long-term commitment of time and resources from employers, legislators, and the public, change will not occur.

Ask yourself, when are you motivated to change? The answer is simple: when something affects you personally. And this issue will affect you personally before you know it. Maybe you won't be able to find the skilled employees needed to keep your business running. Maybe your child will move back home because he or she is unable to find a job. Maybe, as an educator, you will see your students flounder on the so-called “right” path in school.

Whatever the case, this problem is serious...and it's not going away. It isn't speculation or exaggeration, it's foreseeable fact—unless we take action.

*“Learning is not compulsory,  
neither is survival.”*

**—W. Edwards Deming**

# Executive Summary

---

Global competition. Technological change. Instant information. Workforce of the future.

The vast business and economic upheavals brought about by the technological advances of the last decade have affected our lives in ways few people could have imagined. While the world may be a smaller place, the workplace has expanded exponentially, leaving governments, businesses, and schools to grapple with the implications of these changes.

Global change has taken on a very personal meaning in South Carolina as everyone—businesspeople, parents, and educators—feels the demands of the new economy. Simply put, people are beginning to realize that to compete in this changing marketplace, we must evolve our skills, and most importantly, the way we educate our young people—our future workforce.

South Carolina's public schools have adapted to drastic societal changes over the last 50 years; we feel confident that they can meet this new challenge head on.

South Carolina has already initiated far-reaching reforms: standards and assessments; improvements in training our teachers; First Steps and other early childhood initiatives; school-based technology; strengthened leadership at every level; and technical assistance to schools most in need. We applaud these early victories.

The reality, however, is that the workplace is changing at a rate many times faster than our schools. The challenge to keep pace with the world of work, the challenge to educate our young people in a new way, lies with all of us. We must change not only the way we educate our children, but also the way we think about school and its connection to the workplace. Whether students go on to higher education, occupational training, or directly into the workplace, they will need a new kind of education.

While we have made some headway, there are still some disturbing gaps in the South Carolina education system:

- 1) While only 32 percent of our ninth graders will pursue a two-year degree or certification, the majority of jobs—65 percent—will require one;
- 2) Another 28 percent of our ninth graders will pursue a four-year degree, yet only 20 percent of jobs will require one; and
- 3) The final 40 percent of our ninth graders will pursue an “unskilled” job—because they either drop out of high school or simply lack the skills needed for employment—but only 15 percent of jobs available will be considered “unskilled.”

These figures reflect an enormous mismatch of education and workplace needs that our state simply cannot afford, a gap that is growing daily. And the effects extend beyond our students. In fact, many in the South Carolina business community fear they will no longer be able to do business in South Carolina unless we begin to do things differently.

In short, we must meet three vital objectives if our state and its economy are to meet the 21st century with confidence:

- 1) We must prepare all South Carolina students for success in the workplace;
- 2) We must provide South Carolina employers with the skilled employees they need to survive financially; and
- 3) We must create a highly skilled, well prepared, and well-paid workforce that will attract the kinds of businesses that fuel economic development and prosperity.

## Executive Summary CONTINUED...

---

A problem this complex, however, cannot be delegated to any single group or institution. It is a societal one with deep roots. In short, changes in the business environment are outpacing those being made in education on a variety of levels. It is the job of both education and business to find a solution—to create systemic change.

This report offers a roadmap for building systemic solutions to these broad societal issues based on nine specific recommendations, some programmatic, some student-centered, and some organizational in nature.

### BACKGROUND

Unlike in decades past, in today's job market the keys to gaining a competitive edge are knowledge and technical skill, not muscle.

Today's job market requires an entirely new kind of workforce—one whose high-tech skills advance at the rate of technological change and whose abilities include “soft” skills, such as communication and character-related qualities. It requires a workforce with a more balanced educational background, one that reflects the kinds of jobs needed in this century.

At the same time, this workforce must be plentiful enough to meet the employment needs of all South Carolina businesses.

The workforce we're describing will be made up of our children, our students, who are simply not equipped to meet this need and, more importantly, are not equipped for successful careers in the 21st-century workplace.

### LOOKING FORWARD

The future of our state's economic development now depends on parents, students, and employers taking action to bridge the education-workforce gap. Doing this will mean shifting our view of education on a grand scale. South Carolinians must begin to see education as something leading to more than further education; rather, it must prepare students for life.

And the demand for new and different skills in the workplace drives this change.

The Task Force found two sets of skills that will be required for most employees in the 21st-century workplace:

- **Strong academics with real-world problem solving skills**, especially in language arts, math, and science, as well as computer skills;
- **Character-related qualities**, such as respect, responsibility, and honesty.

South Carolina has already undertaken many initiatives to foster the development of these skills, such as the *1994 School-to-Work Transition Act* and *1998 Education Accountability Act*. According to the findings of the Task Force, continued focus on these initiatives is critical to evolving the system.

Yet, a major finding of the Task Force is that the *1994 School-to-Work Transition Act (STWTA)*, which is an essential part of creating change, is not fully implemented and lacks accountability measures. (See Appendix 1B and 1C )

For example, very few schools have implemented the act's requirements: linkages between business and education; mandatory 6th through 12th grade career plans that are committed to by both the student and parent; and a seamless curriculum that is both relevant and rigorous.

## TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Organize students' curriculum choices and school career counseling around **career clusters**, which allow students to reach their fullest potential. This will involve **amending the STWTA** to replace academic pathways with career clusters that emphasize both academics and applied skills. The current system of two pathways, Tech Prep and College Prep, limits options and future career opportunities for most students.
2. **Enforce the 1994 School-to-Work Transition Act (STWTA) through the creation of a Governor's Workforce Education Council** reconstituted from the existing School-to-Work Advisory Council. The new council will be charged with coordinating workforce education development in the state by overseeing implementation of these recommendations and compliance with the existing STWTA.
3. **Curriculum should be aligned with current workplace needs** and should include academic, social, and applied content, and should be transferable among all educational institutions. All students should have a rigorous academic base and be able to apply academics in work-based situations.
4. **Educational standards and testing**, such as PACT, Report Card, and end-of-course testing should integrate the requirements of the STWTA, as well as the *Education Accountability Act*.
5. **The State Board of Education must require courses in applied learning techniques and career development for certification and recertification of all educators.** Higher education should play a role in providing sustained professional development that is tied to existing career development and work-based learning curriculum and methodologies.
6. **New doors must be opened for students at high risk of dropping out** by offering additional educational opportunities that lead to gainful employment and lifelong learning.
7. **Character education should be woven into the fabric of all schools** to address the need for the development of appropriate attitudes such as respect, responsibility, and honesty. These skills are essential for every workplace and are, according to surveys of employers, lacking in many job applicants.
8. **Establish regional service centers** that offer a link between business and education and provide resources to surrounding areas. As the overarching service delivery system, the State Department of Education should also evolve to meet the changing needs of the state, as well as be aligned with the above recommendations, reporting quarterly to the Governor's Workforce Education Council.
9. A **comprehensive, focused, and sustained statewide communications program** should be developed and implemented to ensure all stakeholders understand the changes occurring in education and their roles in implementing them.

## Executive Summary CONTINUED...

While educators need to assume a central role in addressing these issues, they cannot do it alone.

Schools, colleges, and parents must take the lead in developing strong academic skills. Educators and employers must take the lead by jointly developing real-world curriculum and work-based experiences that meet the needs of students and the workplace. Parents and families must take the lead in developing children's character. And legislators must take the lead in adopting and funding legislation that supports ongoing improvement in education.

Specific rationales, details of the Task Force recommendations, and implementation requirements are contained in the body of this report.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Offering ALL students the best possible education must be a priority in South Carolina. Many new, innovative initiatives and proactive efforts to increase student achievement, teacher quality, and district leadership development are evidence of this priority.

Our business community, however, tells us that current efforts are not enough and paints a picture of unprecedented economic change demanding skills many high school, and even college graduates, simply do not have.

South Carolina is at a crossroads.

One road leads to a thriving economy, a diverse and plentiful workforce, and a rich quality of life for years to come. The other road—the road we are on—has created a mismatch between our educational system and workforce needs.

True, leaving this road will be a challenge. It will require creating a rigorous and relevant, yet flexible educational system that provides ALL students with the skills and resources necessary to be successful in a globally competitive environment.

We believe it can be achieved, however, by acting upon the Task Force recommendations.

We believe our recommendations will not only dramatically improve our educational system to create pathways to prosperity for all the young people in South Carolina, but will also pave the pathways to prosperity for businesses that need a quality workforce to boost productivity and profits.

In fact, we believe that implementing our vision is the pathway to prosperity for the entire state as it seeks to survive and indeed thrive in the unforgiving global economy.

*The following two diagrams, entitled “The Workforce Gap” and “Pathways to Prosperity,” illustrate the issues presented within the Executive Summary.*



# The Workforce Gap

Where 9th Graders  
Are Headed\*

vs.

Where the Jobs Are\*\*



**28%** will enter a 4-year college



**20%** require a 4-year college degree



**32%** will enter an associate degree program or advanced training



**65%** require an associate's degree or advanced training



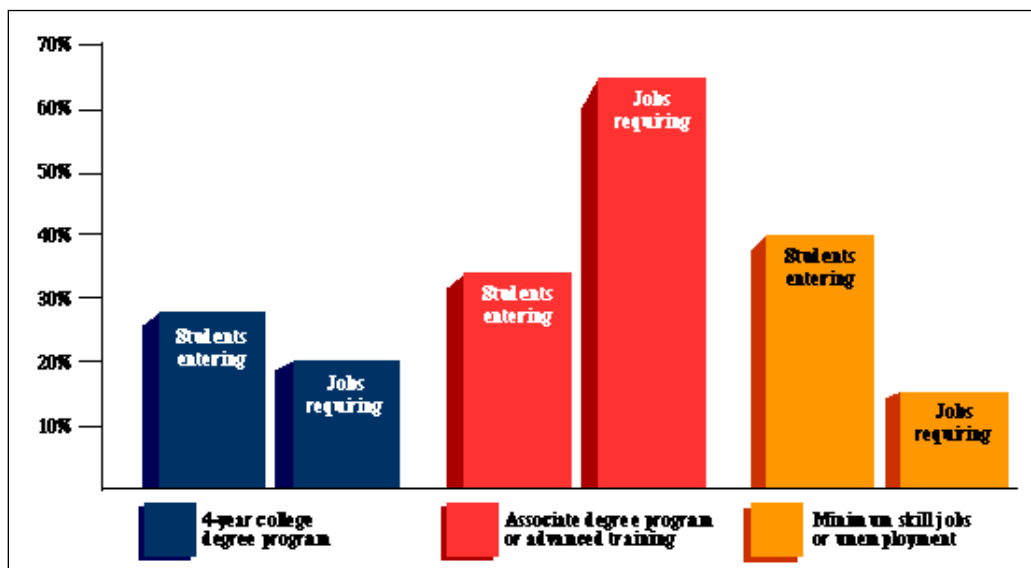
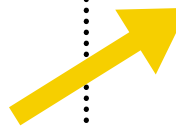
**10%** will lack the skills needed for employment



**15%** require minimum skills



**30%** will drop out before completing high school



\*Source: 1998-1999 State Department of Education Special Survey sent to each high school, 1985-1999 State Department of Education Enrollment Data, and 1989-1999 High School Completer Data

\*\*Source: Carol D'Amico, *Workforce 2020: Work and Workers in the 21st Century*.

Task Force believes jobs requiring a 4-year college degree could be higher than 20 percent.

# Pathways to Prosperity

